

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MEETING – Notes of meeting held at 7.30 pm on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016 in the village hall**

**Present:** Jo Witherden (Planning Consultant with wide experience of helping communities in Dorset create NPs), Fred Horsington (Neighbourhood Plan “champion” from Cerne Abbas), Steve Murcer, David Maughan and Phil Dimmock (HBPC) and 12 members of the public.

**Purpose of meeting:** To hear the experiences of those involved in creating Neighbourhood Plans and consider the potential to create a Plan in HB.

SM welcomed JW and FH

FH explained how the Plan for Cerne Valley (which includes the settlements of Cerne Abbas, Nether Cerne, Up Cerne and Godmanstone) had evolved following their experience as a government funded pilot “front-runner” starting in 2011. It had not been an easy process. Initially a small steering group of 7 had been set up but over time more people became involved as the community began to appreciate the opportunities afforded by having a NP. He stressed a NP gives a community to have the type of development it needs and wants. It isn’t easy, particularly when discussing sites for development etc. There can be a lot of “heat” generated and clashes of opinion are inevitable, but ultimately these are healthy. It’s important that those on a steering committee have a range of views, interests and opinions. He talked through the various stages of creating the Plan (fully covered in December Bryan Bytes). The various stages of seeking feedback through local consultation exercises should ensure the final NP has broad community support. In Cerne 92% voted “yes” on a turnout of 39%. Once the Plan is approved then the parish council has to remember to use the policies within the document to base its comments on planning applications.

JW set the scene of communities in Dorset creating NPs. There is more experience and expertise available now and it ought to be possible to create a NP within 18-24 months. You can never have enough volunteers for a steering group, particularly as there will inevitably be turnover of personnel. A steering group needs people with a range of skills – a chair to provide drive and leadership, communication skills (newsletters, events, community engagement, web site etc), research and analysis, project management, planning policy etc. Some of these may be available within the community, others may have to be bought in. Grant funding of £9k is currently available. A NP has to be in general conformity with the District Council’s Local Plan and policies within the NP have to be rigorously worded in “planning speak” to withstand any potential challenge after adoption. She emphasised that a NP gives the best chance for a community to shape development in their area, even though you won’t please everyone!

**Q & A session:** Main points to emerge were as follows:

- Getting a final overall consensus of community support depends on a successful consultation programme, with the NP evolving to reflect community views and needs. The more people involved the better
- The parish council has the power to be the “relevant body” to develop a NP if it so wishes
- The parish council will not develop a NP itself. The parish council can set up a steering group or committee, with terms of reference etc

- If a NP is not developed communities are more vulnerable to unwanted development, particularly HB as it is one of the 19 sustainable villages identified for rural development in the NDDC Local Plan
- The NP is not a “living” document – it is set for the life of the NP, perhaps until, say, 2031. If it needed to be altered then the whole consultation process would need to be followed, effectively meaning starting from scratch.
- In exceptional circumstances the policies in a NP can be overruled, potentially at a planning appeal etc. This is also true of the NDDC Local Plan itself.
- Government has made it clear that NPs cannot be used to force developers to provide zero carbon development
- So far no NPs have failed a local referendum

Steve Murcer thanked JW and FH for their attendance and input. Those attending who might be interested in joining a steering group were asked to give their contact details to the clerk. The parish council will discuss this issue at the next parish council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016.

Malcolm Wilson  
Clerk to HBPC  
29<sup>th</sup> April 2016